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MEMORIAL

FROM THE

MECHANICS' STATE COUNCIL

IN REFERENCE TO

STATE PRISON LABOR.

T. A. SPRINGER.....STATE PRINTER.

REPORT.

MECHANICS' STATE COUNCIL.

Last Tuesday evening the Mechanics' State Council met, pursuant to notice, President A. M. Winn in the chair, and John D. Condon, Secretary pro tem. The Committee on Prison Labor made the following report:

Your committee, appointed to inquire into and report upon the contract system adopted by the State, in relation to convict labor, have examined the report of the Lieutenant Governor, as made in July last, in relation to the management of the State Prison. At that time there were nine hundred and thirty-one prisoners, five hundred and thirty-one of them working under contracts which require the contractors to take a definite number, with the privilege of more, if they desire. Of the number, fifty are shoemakers, two hundred cabinet makers, one hundred and twenty-five harness makers, sixty-five brick makers, and twenty wagon makers, being three hundred and sixty in all—the optional increase, one hundred and seventy-one, making the whole number five hundred and thirty-one. Governor Pacheco assumes the position we desire, as he recommends that the State work its own prisoners, instead of letting them out to contractors.

When we are informed that the prison is too small by five hundred cells, we wonder why any of them are hired out. They are now keeping three hundred and nineteen prisoners in nine rooms. The smallest number in each is twenty-two, and the largest number, forty-five. Comment on this condition of things is unnecessary, for all will see the impropriety. The scarcely guilty to be indiscriminately mingled with the hardened criminals, would become a school of crime instead of reformation. We recommend a complete change in the system, so as to make the State compete with Chinese labor, in cases where they have monopolized any particular branch of business, and thereby decrease the price still lower, so as to make it unprofitable to employ that class of labor. Chinese labor now has the complete monopoly of doors, blinds, and sash of regular sizes; also, cigars, cigar boxes, coarse clothing, and some other trades. The whole manufacturing in such classes of business has gone into the hands of men who are nothing but Mongolians, with a few white mechanics to teach them and to act as foremen. The State has the room and power for conducting the busi-

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ness, and a few thousand dollars would furnish the necessary machinery for that purpose. In contemplation of such a change, the committee has made a calculation based upon the employment of one hundred men in manufacturing such articles, with the cost of sale and the profits thereon. The manufacture of carpetings would also be a popular measure, as it would take our coarse and unsaleable wool, affording a home market for it, while it would not interfere with the prosecution of any business of our mechanics or manufacturers. The following estimates for making doors, blinds, and sash is from information believed to be reliable:

COST OF MANUFACTURING, ONE WEEK.

1,800 doors, 54,000 feet lumber, at 4½ cents per foot	$2,430 00
2,000 windows, 14,000 feet lumber, at 4½ cents per foot	630 00
600 pairs outside blinds, 7,200 feet lumber, at 3 cents	216 00
100 sets of inside blinds, 2,000 feet lumber, at 5 cents	100 00
Glue, $6; nails, $20; blind wire, $20	46 00
Glass for 2,000 windows	3,000 00
Putty and setting glass	300 00
Wear of machinery	40 00
Rent of sale store	75 00
Three hands at sale store	75 00
Pay roll for 100 men in the shop	1,200 00
Total cost for making	$8,112 00

SALE OF ARTICLES MADE.

1,800 doors, at $2 75 each	$4,950 00
2,000 windows, at $3 each	6,000 00
600 pairs outside blinds, at $2 50	1,500 00
100 sets of inside blinds, at $4 50	450 00
Total	$12,900 00
Deduct cost of making	$8,112 00
Leaves profits for one week	$4,788 00

This estimate is for a private workshop with average wages paid coolies, and the necessary white men. If this work is done by the State we must add to the profits the price of labor, being one thousand two hundred dollars; then the profits would be five thousand nine hundred and eighty-eight dollars on one hundred convicts per week. Suppose five hundred of the men now under contract at the prison should be employed in making articles as above stated, the profits per week would be twenty-nine thousand nine hundred and forty dollars. From this we must deduct one fourth for the difference between free and prison labor; then the profits would be twenty-two thousand four

hundred and fifty-five dollars per week, or one million one hundred and sixty-seven thousand six hundred and sixty dollars per annum. We learn from the State Prison Directors, that the entire expense of the State Prison for two years, was three hundred and fifty-five thousand seven hundred and eighty-four dollars, or one hundred and seventy-seven thousand eight hundred and ninety-two dollars per annum. When we deduct the latter sum from the profits on the labor of five hundred convicts, we have a profit of nine hundred and eighty-nine thousand seven hundred and sixty-eight dollars.

The expenses have exceeded the income from the prison, the enormous sum of two hundred and twelve thousand six hundred and ten dollars, or one hundred and six thousand three hundred and five dollars per annum. Thus we see that a change of this kind would not only make the prison self-sustaining, but make enough in one year to support the prison for five years, and then leave a handsome balance of one hundred thousand three hundred and eight dollars to pay the additional expenses of shop room and machinery. This estimate is astounding to us who are mechanics, and familiar with that kind of work, yet we have gone over the figures several times, and can see no mistake. Suppose, to be sure we are right, we reduce the profits to but one fifth of the estimate, then the prison would be self-sustaining, with a margin of one hundred and ninety-seven thousand five hundred and fifty-seven dollars per annum.

There is another article of manufacture that might be introduced into the State Prison to advantage, without interfering with our mechanics. It is the making of heavy bagging for vegetables. This would afford a market for hemp production, which yields wonderfully in this country. We have not been able to obtain estimates of cost in the manufacturing of bagging or carpeting, but it can be obtained by some little trouble and expense. The manufacture of tools and common cutlery might also be made profitable.

The amount of lumber and its cost is given very full, while the prices for articles made is below the average.

The committee cannot, in justice to themselves, close this report without expressing the opinion that a more liberal share of mechanics in the Legislature would insure much more economy in the administration of public affairs.

All of which is most respectfully submitted for your consideration.

P. M. WELLIN,
J. D. CONDON,
R. MOLLER,
A. M. WINN,
Committee.

DECEMBER 23d, 1873.

On motion, the report was received and agreed to, and the following preamble and resolutions adopted:

WHEREAS, The State Prison of California has been so regulated by law as to cost the State the enormous sum of one hundred and six thousand three hundred and five dollars per annum over and above the income, when it ought to have been self-sustaining and yielding a profit to the State; therefore,

Resolved, That we believe the report of the committee has been carefully made out and may be considered reliable; therefore we direct that copies of it be sent to the Governor, Senate, and Assembly, now in session, and we recommend that the change suggested be adopted by the State in the management of the penitentiary.

Resolved, That the proceedings of this meeting be published in the *Shop and Senate*, and copies furnished to the morning papers, with a request that they publish A. B. Mullet's strong language.

The House Carpenters' proceedings were read and the following resolutions adopted:

Resolved, That we fully indorse the action of the House Carpenters' League and Shop of United Mechanics, in relation to A. B. Mullet, Supervising Architect of the United States, and unite with them in asking for his removal from office.

Resolved, That these resolutions, and a copy of the resolutions passed by the House Carpenters, be sent to Congress as the sentiments of this Council.

The Council then adjourned to meet again at the call of the President, if needed before the next regular meeting, which is on the second Wednesday of January, eighteen hundred and seventy-four.

The foregoing is a true copy of the proceedings of the Mechanics' State Council, at a meeting held in San Francisco, December twenty-third, eighteen hundred and seventy-three, and was directed to be sent to the Assembly of the State Legislature.

Given under our hand and official seal, December twenty-fourth, eighteen hundred and seventy-three.

A. M. WINN, President.

JOHN D. CONDON, Secretary.

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